Steps to stop illegal migration

*215. SHRI MOINUL HASSAN: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of Government has been drawn to the illegal migration to various countries where the migrants are surviving in conditions unfit for human habitation, working at extremely low wages, suffering torture, exploitation, depression and death; and

(b) the steps Government has taken in this regard and stop the illegal trading and arresting them?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) The plight of the illegal workers in the host countries is particularly precarious because of the following reasons:

(i) They get lower wages compared to those who emigrate legally.

(ii) They have to face the vicissitudes of the labour market on a daily basis to find jobs and pay commission to the sponsors.

(iii) The cannot negotiate fair conditions of work because of their illegal status.

(iv) They cannot return home because of the poverty, debt burden and unemployment.

(v) Due to their insecure position, they are often exploited, ill-treated and abused.

(vi) Above all, the danger of getting caught and detained by Immigration always lurks.

(b) On detection of illegal recruitment or emigration, action is taken by the Protector General of Emigrants against the recruiting agents and for foreign employees concerned. The illegal recruiters are prosecuted with the help of the State Police. During 2007 registration certificates of 8 recruiting agents were cancelled. At the moment 336 foreign employees are on the blacklist. During 2007 we received 41 complaints of illegal recruitment. Prosecution sanctions were issued in 7 cases based on police reports.

The Indian Mission plays an important role in mitigating the problems of the victims of illegal migration. Proceedings in the labour courts are initiated against the employer if the conciliation efforts fail. If it becomes necessary the Indian Mission provides humanitarian support to the distressed worker and arranges his repatriation. The Indian community lends a helping hand to the Missions in carrying out these tasks. The Missions take measures for maximizing benefits to such workers under Amnesty schemes of the destination countries.

The Ministry, recognizing the need for proactive preventive measures to stop illegal migration and strengthen the protection and welfare of emigrants by appropriate interventions at various levels, has initiated action at three levels—national, bilateral and multilateral—to make emigration of workers from India an orderly and humane economic activity for the benefit of all stakeholders.

At the national level the Ministry is pursuing a policy of actively discouraging illegal migration and facilitating legal/managed migration. To this end we have taken several steps. We are in the process of amending the Emigration Act to create appropriate provisions to support promotion and facilitation of legal migration, provide for more stringent penalties for offences, creating penal provision against the offence of human smuggling, increasing the penalty for illegal migration and strengthening the regulation of recruiting agents. The

Ministry has set up an Overseas Workers' Resource Centre with a 12/7 helpline to provide an avenue to potential emigrants for accessing information on legal migration channels. To actively build awareness amongst potential emigrants about the risks involved in illegal migration and the precautions to be taken during the migration process a multimedia publicity campaign has been launched.

The Ministry is undertaking emigration reforms to make the emigration process simple, transparent and efficient. We have done away with the requirement of exit clearance for those travelling on visit visa to save non-emigrants from undue inconvenience, harassment and expenditure. This is also aimed at curbing corruption in the emigration system. The Ministry has libealized the criteria for issue of passports to save educated people from undue inconvenience, harassment and expenditure. The Ministry is committed to apply the emigration controls only in respect of vulnerable sections of emigrants in order to ensure their protection and welfare. To protect women emigrants from exploitation, their emigration on ECR passport to ECR countries is allowed only above the age of 30 years and their labour contracts must be attested by the Indian Missions concerned. The emigration clearance system has been computerized recently. A comprehensive e-governance project will be implemented to transform the emigration system into a technology managed process, linking all stakeholdes for online verification/validation of information to prevent malpractices like emigration on forged documents. The regulatory system for recruting agents is being made more stringent.

At the bilateral level the Ministry has been actively pursuing the signing of formal MoUs with the major labour receiving countries not only to secure their commitment towards the protection and welfare of Indian workers but also aimed at streamlining the deployment procedures and removing the loopholes in the system. In December 2006 the Government signed an MoU with the UAE and in April 2007 with Kuwait. In November 2007 an additional Protocol with Quatar was signed to update the 1985 Agreement. MoU are being finalized Malaysia and Oman. MoU are also being pursued with Bahrain and Yemen. Further, to supplement the Agreement the Government of India had signed with the Government of Jordan in 1988, it is proposed to Sign an Additional Protocol to the 1988 Agreement. Efforts are on to persuade the KSA to negotiate an MoU on labour with India.

At the multilateral level we have signed an MoU with the IOM for implementing the Asia-EU project for Regional Dialogue and Program for facilitating legal migration between Asia and the EU countries. The project is already under implementation and will give us an opportunity for capacity building towards migration management and develop overseas employment market in the strategically important European countries and upgrade the Indian workers in the wage chain.

Rising property prices

*216. DR. M. A. M. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of URBAN DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the real estate property prices are rising rapidly in the country;

(b) if so, the rise in real estate property prices during the last three years;

(c) the reasons for such rise in prices of real estate properties;